

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TUNIS

INFO USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 139564

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MASS

SUBJECT: DEPSECDEF MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR HEDDA

1. DURING MEETING WITH DEPSECDEF, 5 JUNE, AMBASSADOR HEDDA
MADE REQUEST FOR MORE FAVORABLE MIX OF GRANT.

2. HEDDA, REFERRING TO THE INCREASINGLY UNSTABLE SITUATION
IN NORTH AFRICA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN, E.G., QADHAFI'S
MILITARY BUILDUP, SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE, UNCERTAINTIES IN
PORTUGAL, ITALY, GREECE, TURKEY, AND THE SAHARA, AND
TUNISIA'S NEED TO CONTINUE EMPHASIS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
SAID THAT TUNISIA WOULD BE HARD PRESSED TO ACCOMMODATE
MUCH OF ITS ESTIMATED 300-700 MILLION DOLLARS MILITARY
REQUIREMENTS WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT HELP FROM U.S. THE U.S.
WAS TERMINATING GRANT PROGRAM AT TIME OF TUNISIA'S GREATEST
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NEED. ADDITIONAL CREDITS, WITH HIGH INTEREST RATES, WOULD

PUT REAL BURDEN ON TUNISIA AND MAKE ITS DECISIONS MORE
DIFFICULT. -

3. DOD REPRESENTATIVES POINTED OUT THAT GRANT MATERIAL PROGRAMS WERE BEING PHASED OUT BECAUSE OF CONGRESSIONAL DESIRE TO REDUCE OVERALL SIZE OF PROGRAM. AS EXPLAINED TO PRIME MINISTER DURING RECENT VISIT, AMBASSADOR INFORMED AGAIN, WE STILL PLAN CONTINUE GRANT TRAINING PROGRAM IN FY 76, AS WELL AS TRY FOR GREATLY INCREASED FMS CREDIT PROGRAM OF 15 MILLION DOLLARS. IT WAS ALSO POINTED OUT TO AMBASSADOR THAT ALTHOUGH WE WOULD CONTINUE TO EVALUATE THE THREAT AND TUNISIA'S NEEDS, WE HAD REAL PROBLEMS WITH CONGRESS.

4. RESPONDING TO QUERY ON THREAT, AMBASSADOR SAID TUNISIA WAS CONCERNED WITH SOVIET POSITION IN LIBYA. EVEN IF REPORTS OF SIZE OF SOVIET ARMS DEAL WERE EXAGGERATED, CONSERVATIVE ESTIMATE OF 1 BILLION DOLLARS WERE STILL GRAVE CONCERN TO TUNISIA. TUNISIA HAD TRANQUIL RELATIONS WITH ALGERIA, ALTHOUGH OBTAINED AT PRICE OF UNFAVORABLE SETTLEMENT OF PREVIOUSLY DISPUTED BORDER. TUNISIA'S REAL CONCERN WAS QADHAFI AND DANGERS HE POSED FOR SUCH COUNTRIES AS TUNISIA.

5. COMMENT: GOT APPARENTLY WORKING EVERY ANGLE TO SEE WHAT THEY CAN GET FROM USG BEFORE COMMITTING TUNISIAN RESOURCES. IT IS IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, THAT GOT MOVE QUICKLY TO PROVIDE LEGAL OPINION REQUIRED BY TREASURY (COPY AIRMAILED CHUSLOT, 3 JUN) AND TO AUTHORIZE SIGNING OF FY 75 FMS CREDIT AGREEMENT. AGREEMENT MUST BE SIGNED BEFORE END OF MONTH SO THAT FUNDS CAN BE OBLIGATED BEFORE JULY 1. KISSINGER

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